

NOTES ON THE GULF OF MEXICO ALLIANCE
REGIONAL RESTORATION COORDINATING TEAM WORKSHOP
BILOXI, MISSISSIPPI
JUNE 13-15, 2006

ACTION ITEMS

1. On or about July 6, Mr. Woodrow will host a conference call with the State representatives.
2. By July 18, they will have a document that begins to lay out what the States need from the Federal agencies to move things forward.
3. In October hold the first State-led workshop as agreed upon.
4. Provide Becky Allee, Becky.Alee@noaa.gov, with data base information within the next couple of weeks.
5. Gulf of Mexico Foundation will send out meeting notes for review by participants prior to the July 18 meeting.
6. Gulf of Mexico Foundation will send out participants' contact list.

ACTION ITEMS RE COOPERATION WITH MEXICO

1. The Gulf of Mexico Foundation will have the Governors Action Plan translated into Spanish and provide to the representatives from Mexico.
2. The Gulf of Mexico Foundation will get Governors' office contacts from HRI and provide to the representatives from Mexico.
3. Mexico and US State representatives will work to establish counterparts in Texas and Mexico.
4. Mexico representatives will hold a workshop in Mexico in September. (May want U.S. representation at that meeting.)
5. Effort should be made to match U.S. program efforts.

DAY 1

Dr. Dokken welcomed everyone to the meeting. After introductions, he said that at some point in the future we will need to include representatives from business and industry in these discussions. He gave a presentation on the reason for the meeting with a focus on the need for habitat sustainability and productivity in the Gulf of Mexico. Dr. Dokken

said it will take a team effort, involving Federal and State entities, NGO's, and eventually business and industry. This is a collaborative resource management effort that crosses local, State, and national boundaries. We need to look at land use planning, both near term and long term.

Dr. Dokken presented the revised agenda for the meeting. We need a regional synthesis of the restoration work that is currently being done, and we need to identify regional goals and communication strategies. He said that the public sector can be a powerful force in dealing with the legislators. We need to keep the public informed about what we are doing. We need to develop a strategy for securing vested interests' resources and participation. At the conclusion of this meeting, we want to have a plan to move the process forward.

Regional syntheses:

Louisiana: Len Bahr said that Louisiana took the lead in drafting the original white paper for Gulf of Mexico restoration because of the critical needs of that State. Then hurricane Katrina hit and the city of New Orleans was devastated. The public is a little cynical because they have heard all sorts of different plans. Louisiana is doing restoration on a larger scale than most of the other States.

Mr. Bahr thinks there should be State-hosted, science-driven workshops that are technical and more detailed. Ecosystem restoration is an experimental process. We are breaking new ground as we learn what works and what does not.

Mr. DuCote referred to the various different programs that are doing restoration work in Louisiana: GEMS, CWPPRA, CEPRA, NOAA Community Based Restoration Program, Berraterria Terrebone National Estuary Program, Lake Ponchartrain Restoration, etc. There are planning efforts going on that will inform and affect these programs, MARGO for example. Some of these plans can impact other plans. LSU is doing work along those lines as well as the USL and the Coastal Studies Institute. Also, the Wetlands BioGeoChemistry Lab. Those are some of the other planning and modeling groups at the various universities and the Federal Government.

Dr. Dokken said part of the challenge we face is how to incorporate all of these different efforts so that we can begin to speak with one voice. Mr. Bahr said even with all of these programs, we are still not covering the territory sufficiently. He said in Louisiana they are involved in a planning program that is mostly coastal areas, and it needs to expand and grow inward. Louisiana has need for a broader coastal footprint.

Florida: Randy Runnels said they are doing hydrologic monitoring to ensure that they are not doing any damage as they do surface water management program activities. Their biggest restoration program encompasses several watersheds. NGO's are instrumental in bringing in volunteers and in encouraging public buy-in to restoration efforts. Some of the restoration projects are more successful than others, so it is important to take a look at what they are trying to accomplish. Mr. Runnels said they need an objective approach to

what is needed and what habitat loss has occurred. He said they need to be getting the most bang for the buck in an environmental sense. Mr. Runnels said we probably should establish larger criteria for restoration of wetlands and monitoring efforts. In Florida, there is a role for sound science.

Mr. Runnels pointed out that in Florida, water management districts (with taxing authority) and local governments carry out much of the restoration work. Mr. Bahr said all State administrations and resource agencies have the problem where the different agencies that have some authority do not have much interest in sharing funding among agencies. Dr. Dokken said the complexity of activities in each of the States is a big issue to resolve. Mr. Runnels said coordinating restoration that covers water quality is difficult. Mr. DuCote said in Louisiana they created by statute and tried to have a single coordinator, but it does not always function that way. There was discussion on the need for a restoration “czar” or catch basin. Mr. Lorenz said there is a lot of reinventing of the wheel, with numerous agencies having money to spend on restoration projects.

Mr. Runnels said we need to set restoration objectives and success criteria, and we need longer-term tracking of restoration efforts.

It was pointed out that in Mississippi and Alabama, Sea Grant is putting together a list of what restoration projects are on-going and what has been done in the past.

Texas: Woody Woodrow said that the Texas General Land Office (TGLO), the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) all play a role in restoration efforts. There is no over-arching plan for Texas. The Sea Grass Conservation Plan is mostly an educational tool. They are involved in the estuary programs in Texas. They partner with TGLO for matching funds. Lack of matching dollars for Federal monies and people to run the projects are problems.

Some of the planning efforts in Texas include the Gulf Coast Joint Venture, Gulf Coast Fisheries Council, the Coastal 20/20 process, etc. There are a lot of stakeholder groups involved in the State. Tom Calnan said there are six funding programs being used in Texas. Through the CIAP program run by Minerals Management Service, Texas will get \$250 million spread out over four years. It is one of the best sources for wetlands acquisitions in a long time. They also use CWPPRA funds, the National Coastal Restoration Grant Program, the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (NOAA), the Coastal Wetlands Partnership, CEPRA, and there may be money available from FEMA’s hazards restoration funds for use with dunes restoration.

Relative sea level rise is an issue of concern in Texas as it is in all of the Gulf Coast States. Another issue for concern is invasive species. In Texas they are using isolated wetlands on a wide scale, and beneficial use of dredge material. Texas has a regional cooperative agreement with Mexico, and there need to be more cooperative efforts with Mexico in the areas of sea grasses, water quality, and bird habitat.

Mr. Woodrow said they would not be able to do most of their projects without partnerships with Federal and State agencies and NGO's.

Mississippi: Robert Seyfarth said a lot of restorations and acquisitions in Mississippi have been focused around permitting activities. They have mitigation banks where they have gotten some meaningful blocks for restoration. This is done through the Department of Marine Resources and its Coastal Preserves program. Money comes from the Tidelands program. When the tidelands are impacted, there are fees charged by the State, and the money is used for public access or projects to benefit the public. In Mississippi they have made an effort to find opportunities for beneficial use of dredge material. Currently there is an effort to try to get the concrete removed from the bridges that are to be rebuilt so it can go to a beneficial use rather than to the companies that are doing the rebuilding. One example of a beneficial use would be oyster reefs.

Money is coming in for restoration of habitats related to Katrina. Mr. Seyfarth said they need to be getting assessments on how much has been lost on the barrier islands and then start rebuilding it. There will be significant monies available for some of this work. Mr. Ruple said Mississippi has been working with the Corps of Engineers to develop a priority restoration list. The Governor got \$10 million in coastal restoration funding to be used over the next 20 years.

Alabama: Carl Ferraro said they have no one State plan for habitat restoration in coastal Alabama. They have GEMS, NOAA Community Based Restoration Program, for example, and there are a lot of different coastal restoration programs going on. Because Alabama has such a small coastal area, all of the groups work well together. Still, they do not know exactly what everybody is doing and what they have already done.

Mr. Ferraro said they are putting together "the Coastal Restoration Working Group," comprised of Federal and State agency representatives and NGO's. The group will try to come up with a data base. They are getting all the non-restoration projects into the data base. Mitigation will not be included in the data base. The working group will try to have periodic coordination meetings to tell about what each group is doing, what they want to do, and to share information. They have also talked about having an outreach to Mississippi and possibly outreach efforts to Florida. The working group effort fits very well with the Gulf of Mexico Alliance. They want to coordinate within the State but also with its neighbors.

An issue of concern is finding matching funds for Federal monies, as is the case with Texas. It is especially difficult with large-scale restoration projects that cost over \$1 million. Perhaps the Gulf of Mexico Alliance can work on getting a change at the Federal Level to reduce the need for such large matching funds. He thinks it is a good idea for all five States to speak with one voice on restoration issues.

Dr. Dokken said it seems there is a tremendous amount of work to be done in figuring out who is doing what. He suggested that each State might want to come up with a synthesis

of restoration work so we can put it into a regional synthesis. This team should design the metrics needed, and then have each State use those metrics to develop the synthesis.

U. S. Geological Survey: Jimmy Johnson said the U.S. Geological Survey's mission is to provide science in a changing world. They support restoration activities across the Gulf of Mexico. They have been involved in mapping coastal wetlands in Alabama. They have worked with the State of Mississippi, and also have done some work in Texas. The Geology group has done a lot of restoration of shorelines. Water Resources group has been looking at restoration in coastal Louisiana. The USGS strongly supports the Gulf of Mexico Alliance, including identification of habitats.

Mr. Johnson referred to the Priority Habitat Information System (PHINS) being developed by the USGS, NOAA, and the Corps of Engineers. He pointed out that we have to identify the habitats before we can determine how to restore them. Mr. Johnson said USGS can offer to assist with the restoration group data base.

Mr. Johnson said they are deeply involved with the CWPPRA program. USGS has entered into an agreement with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to look at wetlands across the Gulf. They want to link up habitat and restoration. Mr. Johnson said there is an opportunity to collaborate in their habitat data base rather than have to start up a new one. Also, there is a lot of overlap between habitat education and restoration. All of this also fits in the Alliance Plan's Education/Outreach component.

Gulf of Mexico Program: Diane Altsman said the GOMP is a part of the Environmental Protection Agency. In 2000 they established a habitat focus team. The goal was to protect, restore, and enhance coastal habitat by 2,400 acres per year. Another goal was to establish baselines for coastal wetlands habitats and sea grasses. They have partnerships with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, NOAA CRP, Coastal America, the Nature Conservancy, GEMS, etc. Now that program has moved into the Alliance. They have posted an RFP and all of the proposals fall under the Alliance actions.

Mr. Drew Puffer said in mid-July the GOMP and the Alliance is scheduling a meeting in New Orleans. It is scheduled for July 18-20. There are issues coming up in this meeting that perhaps could be addressed at the New Orleans meeting. The invitations for that meeting will be going out shortly. Christy Loper said the focus of that meeting will be to talk about implementation of the Governors' Action Plan in all topic areas, not just restoration. They will talk about whether each focus area has the resources needed to carry out the items in the Governors' Action Plan. It will also allow for input from industry, business, NGO's, etc. Jimmy Johnson referred to a flyer that is being sent out on the Priority Habitat Information System and how it can be converted to a Priority Restoration System. That will be discussed at the July meeting in New Orleans. Mr. Johnson will provide Kendal Keyes with a copy of the flyer so that she can send it out electronically to this meeting's participants.

Ms. Loper said the States will be issuing the invitations for the July 18 meeting. State management team representatives are:

Texas – Bruce Moulton
Florida – Stephanie Bailenson
Mississippi – Bill Walker
Alabama – Phil Hinesley
Louisiana – Karen Gautreaux

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—Ken Rice said they are involved with restoration matters through NRDA. They are looking at doing a lot of conservation easements. They partner with a lot of different groups. When there are damages caused by industry, they encourage conservation easements and restorations. That funding can be through matching funds.

NOAA—Becky Allee said she is now headquartered at Stennis at the new NOAA Gulf Services Center. She is doing a needs assessment to drive the focus of the center. They are focusing on the northern Gulf. Habitat mapping and characterizations will be key components. They would be interested in some of the plans that the States have been mentioning. To provide input for the needs assessment, please email those plans to becky.allee@noaa.gov.

With regard to a restoration database, she said she was on an inter-agency working group for the Estuary Restoration Act, and one of the requirements of that act was for NOAA to develop a data base for restoration projects. It is up and running. The States do not know much about it, but there is no funding available to the States to get their data into the data base. It is called NERI (www.neri.noaa.gov.)

Ms. Allee said that last week Congress passed a supplemental budget for post-Katrina efforts. NOAA received some money for hazards mapping and they hope to build some habitat features in to that. Also, they received money for oyster habitat restoration. For the '07 budget for the Gulf Services Center, \$3 million has been requested to try to help Alliance activities.

Ric Rubsaben talked about the Habitat Restoration Program. Their mission has been to try to influence decisions made by Federal agencies regarding coastal habitat and support marine fishery issues. Now they are more involved in restoration planning activities. They are one of five Federal agencies in Louisiana for implementing CWPPRA. They also have an office in Galveston that has a lot of small-scale programs on coastal habitat restoration. There is also an office in Panama City, Florida, working on permitting and project activities.

Kris Benson works for a NOAA Community Based Restoration Center. He works with the Southeast Region. There are people in St. Petersburg, Baton Rouge, and he is in Galveston, Texas. He is involved in NRDA, restoration research, CWPPRA, etc. The Community Based program tries to engage nonprofits and other small groups in restoration projects. They ask applicants to identify what public benefits their projects fall under and work towards those goals.

There was discussion about the USGS and the NOAA databases. One is for habitats and one for restoration. There should be an entire workshop dedicated to this topic. Dr. Dokken said ideally there should be a hub of information database that the States could input directly to. An issue is duplicative databases and data collection activities. USGS just wants to know where the information is and how to get to it.

NOAA representatives said there is a goal of restoring one million acres by 2010. The inventory is supposed to help count those acres. Mitigation projects cannot be included.

U.S. Department of Agriculture—Eddie Seidensticker said they have several partnerships in and around Texas. They do not do a project without talking to the groups that are involved. He said there is a Beneficial Use Program for Houston/Galveston and that required a lot of Federal and State agencies to come together and develop the plan. The port and the Corps of Engineers have said that 100 percent of dredge material in that area will be used beneficially. Mr. Seidensticker said we can all benefit from sharing lessons learned. They are also working with plant materials for wetlands restoration. They have some funding projects under the Conservation Security Program. He was pleased that one of the suggestions was to expand coastal restoration further inland.

Minerals Management Service, Department of the Interior—Daniel Leedy said that their big program is the CIAP. There have been planning and public meetings on-going. MMS is going to be hiring a staff to oversee projects that come in and review the project proposals. Plans include doing mitigation compliance monitoring as a means to determine whether or not the mitigations have been done and how effective they are. MMS also has an Environmental Studies program and that does monitoring and looks at impacts of OCS activities.

Mr. Leedy mentioned the Ocean Research Priorities Program. That has some of the same challenges as the CIAP.

Corps of Engineers—Bob Bosenberg said they are looking at the effectiveness of their program and they have been working on a proactive basis and as a strategic thinking organization. They solicited input from other agencies in the planning process. They are trying to be more watershed-centered and more partnership driven. The decision-making process for the Corps to issue a permit is that the Colonel must document the issues looked at, what was used to come to the decision, and then the decision itself. They are also tasked with looking at restorations in conjunction with their other mission areas such as watersheds. Their missions include restorations, flood control, and navigation. Along the Gulf Coast there are five separate Corps of Engineers districts. There needs to be close coordination to be effective. All of their projects require a cost-sharing partner. There are different cost-sharing formulas for various projects.

Mr. Bosenberg pointed out that regional sediment management is part of the decision-making process on Corps of Engineers projects. Keeping sediments in natural systems requires partnerships. They want to know the scale of the project, what the schedule is,

and where the money will come from. They have adopted a Regional Sediment Management Plan and it is a philosophy. They now look at how to manage a project to take best advantage of the sediments. They are looking at the overall scheme of sediment transport. Mr. Bosenberg said they have developed an extensive regional GIS program. It stores and manages data and can be provided to transport users. They want to try to develop standards so that all of the transport databases can talk to each other. He pointed out that sediment movement does not recognize State boundaries. They operate in more than one State in the Gulf and there are different authorities and regulations on what they can do in a particular State. They have a lot of disposal sites that are reaching their capacity for dredge material so they are looking for uses of those materials.

Dr. Dokken said we should be sure to have some representatives at future meetings to talk about public health issues. He also said that the issue of developing sustainable interactive relationships in the Gulf of Mexico always comes to the forefront on discussions of what needs to be done. Yet, we do not seem to make much headway. The communications and interactions have to be sustained and continuous in order for that to happen.

Mexican Partnerships –Sr. Leon with CONABIO said that restoration work in Mexico is really a subject for NGO's and academia. They do not have a coastal act nor a restoration act. They do not have Federal jurisdiction that works on coastal issues. The authority is scattered among different ministries. In July there will be a new Administration in Mexico, so there will be little opportunity for US and Mexico programs to be started at this time. There is a need for continuous, sustainable partnerships that will cross Administrations.

Sr. Leon said they have had some good programs with reforestation of coastal mangroves. There have been some good success stories over the 12-year period. In order to propose a restoration agenda, they will need to focus on an area that can be productive. He pointed out that while the United States has more than 50 percent of the population living on the coast, in Mexico it is only about 21 percent. The main problem Mexico faces with restoration is because of cattle ranching. There have been some funds available in the past related to impacts on ecosystems, but those funds are currently not available. However, the legal framework is still in place. CONABIO's Committee to Improve Biodiversity was handling those funds. There are some success stories related to use of that funding for restoration.

Another opportunity is that they have an agency like FEMA. There are funds available through that agency for restoration. Sr. Leon said that the definition of restoration needs to be clarified in the context of Mexico. We need to compare what the meaning of the term is so that we can find some common ground.

Dr. Dokken said the challenge of changing Administrations and continuity of projects is an issue common to both Mexico and the United States.

Tom Calnan asked if the fact that Mexico made the Laguna Madre is a Protected Area makes any difference. Sr. Leon said it will depend on funding opportunities. With regard to formal agreements with Mexico, the State Department has been in discussion with Mexico about doing some work with the United States. There are also possible opportunities through CWRP. Also private industry can help as well as NGO's. Eric Gustafson with the U.S./Mexico Chamber of Commerce is interested in getting some of these things going. Rafael Calderon with the Nature Conservancy said there will always be hurdles, but that does not preclude us from having meetings like this one where agreement is reached on what is important for restoration. Then those priorities can be applied in each country as opportunity permits. If we develop a unified voice, we can have an impact on elected officials.

Sr. Leon said there are ways to work together. Perhaps through NGO's or academic institutions. He pointed out that Andres Bonilla is with SEMARNAT and the Pronatura organization has offices in all of the States in Mexico.

Andres Bonilla spoke about efforts by the Federal agency, SEMARNAT. He said they have been trying to address watersheds and lagoons and the impacts on those areas. About a year ago, they got approval to have a National Designated Sanctuary in the Laguna Madre. It was chosen because of its estuarine activity and has a lot of impact on the economic sector of fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico. They have been working on specific plans for sea grasses, coastal forests, and deciduous forests. Through this, they have developed a comprehensive management plan. The plan is still being worked on, but once it has been published, it will be available. There is a comprehensive management plan being prepared for an area in the south near Campeche Sound. The question was asked if funding needs are addressed under the comprehensive plan. Mr. Bonilla agreed that funding is an issue. In relation to the turtle protectors, they have been doing monitoring on the turtles, but now they have to go back and look at the effects on sea grasses.

In the southern part of the State, they have been working with municipalities. They work together as a whole State with regard to the environment. In Tamaulipas they have established regulations for protection of turtles. Also in the southern part of Tamaulipas they have been working on cleaning up the shorelines of the rivers. That has only been possible because of the good will of the authorities in the counties and the will of the people who want this to happen. Working with industry, the public, and the school systems, they have been developing awareness programs and education programs to promote awareness of environmental issues. They have also been working to try to prevent runoff from watersheds getting down to the coast.

Mr. Bonilla said they are working to restore forested areas to increase bird habitat. The above is just a quick look at the work they have been doing in Tamaulipas and Vera Cruz. He said what he has been hearing at this meeting fits well with what they have been doing, and he looks forward to working together.

Alfonso Banda spoke on behalf of Pronatura. He said that Pronatura has been working for about 8 years in the Laguna Madre and Tamaulipas. Working together with The Nature Conservancy, they developed two eco-regional plans--the Coastal Wetlands and the Laguna Madre Protected Area. Regionally speaking, some of these efforts extend into the United States and one as far as Louisiana. The Laguna Madre has been a priority site for some time. It was decided early on that it needed to be a Protected Area. The Government was trying to develop some kind of sustainable use of the area. After several years of work, last year the Government committed to making it a Protected Area and they are currently finishing up the plan. The plan also contains a section on financial planning that tries to identify funding sources for the work.

Mr. Banda said they have restored about 5,000 hectares of agrarian resources. They have worked with fishing communities in developing sustainable development projects, and they have also been working on bird groups—Colonial wading birds and migrants. They have also worked on sea grass recovery. He said much of the work that has been done was with Federal funding. They have been working with strong support from CONABIO. A little over \$1 million has been proposed for this work. Half of the funds that come for wetlands restoration come from there, and the other half is local State and municipal funds. Mr. Banda said with regard to manufacturing companies, maquiladores, the municipalities recognize the need for water treatment plants due to the effects of those industries. They received some funding from a bank to actually build the plants. The process has started in the cities, but then they have to build the waste-water treatment plants.

Ms. Eliza Perez spoke on restoration efforts in Vera Cruz. They have a national Committee on Wetlands that is very proactive. They are focusing mainly on mangrove restoration. They also have a network for restoration, but do not have a plan for restoration. Loss of mangroves is due to cattle ranching and urban development. There are five species of mangrove in the area, and the White Mangrove has almost disappeared. They also do not have a wetlands inventory. The inventory they do have is related to mangroves. The Mexican Government is putting a little money into reforestation of mangroves. With regard to Vera Cruz, last year, 1,700 acres were restored with \$76,000 that goes through NGO's. They do not have much information about setting budgets. This relates to the mangroves and reforestation efforts. They also do community outreach on the importance of restoring the mangroves. They are trying to get the various State governments along the coasts to work together on long-term land use planning.

Eduardo Cuevas spoke for Pronatura Yucatan. They have had some experience working in partnerships. They have worked together recently in acquiring some acreage around the coast. There is a big concern about beach erosion and the Government is investing monies on that issue. He said there are some projects assessing the sea level rise and also some of the problems with the mangroves. They lost about 95 percent of their mangroves due to the hurricanes, although they are starting to recover. Now in the Yucatan they are developing a land use plan that has been in effect for about a year. Mr. Cuevas said

partnerships with institutions and universities work well. One of the best ways is to work through NGO's and institutions.

The Nature Conservancy—Rafael Calderon said the Nature Conservancy has been involved in the Gulf of Mexico for a long time in conservation and restoration. Each State in the northern Gulf has some kind of TNC program on the coast now, but they also have programs in Mexico as well. A lot of the conservation work is following a process established by the Nature Conservancy. They call it eco-regional planning. The Northern Gulf of Mexico Eco-Regional Assessment generated a lot of priority areas across the whole Gulf. TNC established its Gulf of Mexico Program about two years ago. The idea for the initiative is to connect things together with the different programs. They are trying to do restoration of sea grasses along the coast, and are looking at how they can work on those systems in an integrated way. They are also working on oyster reefs.

Mr. Calderon said the coastal forests have been hit quite hard in the Gulf of Mexico. Mexico is working on the Tamaulipas Thorn Shrub. Those are very important systems connected to the coast but are rarely thought of that way. They are working on wetlands restoration and hopefully in the future with mangroves in Mexico. There is a lot of coastal erosion affected by boat traffic so the marshes retreat because of that energy. They are working to try to abate some of that energy so the marsh has a chance to recover. Mr. Calderon has been working closely with the Alliance to set the priorities on a regional scale, and then work locally.

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation—Jill Parrish said they are a nonprofit foundation. They were created 20 years ago to leverage Federal funds. They receive Federal funds from an appropriations process. They put that money available into 501C3 entities. The Federal funds have to be matched dollar for dollar. Congress did not provide a budget so the Foundation has to raise the money to help get the Federal monies out. She said they have major corporate partnerships. They write grants to other private foundations and they hold fundraisers to raise their operating expenses. They now get Federal appropriations from a number of Federal agencies. Last year they put over \$34 million of Federal monies on the ground in grants. They also manage mitigation funds--\$100 million worth. Ms. Parrish has been thinking about how the NFWF can play a role in the Alliance and what that role would be. As the State coastal plans are developed, there might be a need for a staff member involved in the Alliance to collect all those State plans and make a regional plan. The NFWF might be able to fund a person to do the compiling. She said that State Management Plans are key to restoration efforts.

Ms. Parrish said the Foundation answers to Congress and to a Board of Directors. She mentioned that they have raised \$6.5 million privately. She listed some of the grant making programs:

- The 5-Star Program
- The Coastal Counties Restoration Initiative
- Marine Debris Removal Program

Spirit of Conservation (bird conservation)
Hurricane Wildlife Relief Fund
Bottomland Hardwoods
Programs with Conoco Phillips and Shell Oil

She is trying to get the June 15 deadline for grant applications for this year extended. She said if anyone is interested in the Hurricane Wildlife Relief Fund to please contact her.

Ms. Parrish said their new Executive Director is Jeff Trandel, and they are currently going through a major strategic planning process.

Coastal America's Coastal Wetlands Restoration Partnership—John Bowie said it brings together partners from Federal and State agencies and with private industry to assist projects coming up a little short on funding. They have chapters in 13 States—mainly coastal. Along the Gulf they have tried to make sure that they are aligned directly with the GOM Alliance. They rely on the Federal and State agencies to bring forward prospective projects. They are working on one in the Bahia Grande. They will probably come up with \$100,000 in monies and about \$50,000 in-kind resources. They now have a Gulf Regional Program working to establish CWRP's in all 5 U.S. Gulf States. Mr. Bowie said we need to create a road map that identifies all the Federal and State programs and other funding entities. Also, with regard to the RRCT, he said it might be helpful to have a very small group to ramrod this.

The Gulf of Mexico Foundation—Quenton Dokken said the GOMF came out of the Gulf of Mexico Program in 1990 with the express purpose of helping to access the funding sources that Government agencies could not easily interact with. The Foundation became involved with habitat restoration about six years ago. They took the GEMS program and then leveraged it with NOAA's Community Based Restoration program. They have over 30 projects in the Gulf States, and have started projects in the Caribbean as well. The Foundation also has education and outreach programs. It has programs that provide education on a binational basis with the public, schools, etc.

Dr. Dokken said with regard to NGO's that there are dozens working in the Gulf States. Many of them are very small. They are active and passionate about what they are doing. They may have similar challenges to the State and Federal agencies. He said that despite all of the effort and money, habitat degradation is still increasing. We have to establish baselines. Dr. Dokken said we have a half day tomorrow to put together a report on the workshop and identify the issues that have been brought forth. We should have that report ready for the July 18-20 GOM Alliance meeting. He said we will want to go to that meeting and report out on what happened.

For tomorrow's session, Dr. Dokken asked everyone to come back with five issues that we need to do to move this effort forward. We will then try to fit all of the issues into a master list. We want to identify ways we can move forward to become a unified group for restoration work in the Gulf of Mexico.

There was discussion on whether to use the pre-Katrina plan of action outline or the Post-Katrina document. It was agreed that we would use the more-detailed pre-Katrina document for the discussions. Dr. Dokken said we need to identify our priorities for future workshops. He asked everyone to come up with five specific actions necessary to move us from this point to implementation, and to consider how they relate to the pre-Katrina document. He also asked everyone to think about specific workshop topics that need to be addressed. Mr. Woodrow said, too, that we should think about how individual organizations can help with the process outlined in the document.

Christy Loper said there are other workshops going on focusing on other issues. Habitat is meeting and also the Education and Outreach group. The meeting in New Orleans involves all of the five work groups. The Alliance Management Team composed of the five State leads from each State plus EPA and NOAA thought it was important to bring everyone together for an implementation workshop. It will include more representatives from academia, industry, and NGO's. The actual workshop portion of the meeting is on Tuesday and Wednesday, July 18 and 19. The State leads are:

Texas – Bruce Moulton
Florida – Stephanie Bailenson
Mississippi – Bill Walker
Alabama – Phil Hinesley
Louisiana – Karen Gautreaux

The Federal coordinators are now Drew Puffer, EPA, and Becky Allee, NOAA.

The five working group topics are:

Restoration
Water quality
Nutrients
Outreach
Habitat identification/mapping

Len Bahr said we may want to invite someone from Mexico who is involved with hurricane risks. Dr. Dokken said we need to have continuous interactions with the States of Mexico.

DAY 2

Strategic Objective I, Goal 1

Randy Runnels said we need to put together a synthesis. There should be meetings in each State with the appropriate departments involved to provide an overview of the State's restoration efforts. Woody Woodrow said the States need to get together and determine what has worked and what has not and come to some agreement on seeking funds for implementation. He said the States also need to develop a standard format for

all of the States. We need to think about what we are going to get out of the next few months—what will be the product?

It was suggested that each State meet individually first and clearly identify what restoration objectives are and what funding resources are available. It was proposed that there be two meetings among the States—one focused on the science and the other about policy.

Dr. Dokken asked if the participants of this meeting will be the ones to take the lead on the individual State meetings. In Texas, it will be Tom Calnan and Woody Woodruff. Mississippi will check with Dr. Walker on who should be the lead. In Alabama it will be Carl Ferraro. In Florida it will be Randy Runnels, and in Louisiana it is to be determined.

Mr. Lorenz asked if there is information available about restoration programs directed by the States. Such inventory information is out there, but it will require a meeting of all of the States first to determine what information to gather. One goal is to try to develop science-based criteria for restoration successes. Mr. Leedy said there needs to be an overarching plan among the States.

Dr. Dokken asked about a timeline for these efforts. March 2009 is the end time for the action plan. Mr. Woodrow suggested that meetings be quarterly, with each State hosting one of them. They need to understand what each State's challenges are and hear about their successes. It was suggested that the first meeting bringing all the States together might be in September or October. Mr. Ferraro said he would like to invite the Federal representatives he wants to the meetings. There was a suggestion made that there should be a single representative from individual Federal agencies to participate in the meetings to provide continuity. The States can decide if there are Federal and NGO people they want to invite to each meeting. So there would be a core group that would go to every meeting.

For the Corps of Engineers, how would that work? Right now they have a person from each District to participate in the focus groups. In Texas, Mr. Woodrow said he might want planning people from the Corps of Engineers plus someone that has a Gulf-wide perspective. Mr. Bosenberg with the Corps of Engineers said the Corps would need a request from the States on what type of people they want to participate.

It was agreed that the State representatives will get together by teleconference first. Woody Woodrow will take care of setting it up to discuss the types of people they want to participate. The State representatives need to email Mr. Woodrow the best date in July.

It was pointed out that it would be good to have a draft document by the July 18 meeting. It would be a written protocol on how the Federal agencies should participate. October will be the target date for the first workshop. That meeting will be hosted by the Alabama DCNR. The meeting will focus on that State and its restoration efforts. They may also want to talk about the overall issues involved. It was pointed out that it will

take about 15 months for all of the States to host a meeting and make the presentations. Mr. DuCote suggested having two States present at the same time. There would be less travel funding issues if they reduced the number of meetings down from 5 to 3. Also it would shorten the length of time required to get all the meetings held. Alabama and Mississippi could co-host the first meeting. The meetings can have a technical component and also a policy discussion. He pointed out there are some uniform issues that can be put together quickly such as sea level rise and subsidence since there is common ground there already. Asking Federal agencies for funding for those issues could be done fairly quickly. Some of these discussions can be done by teleconference.

Mr. Calnan said with regard to the number of workshops, if we start in October with Alabama and Mississippi, then Florida, followed by Louisiana and then Texas, that would be four meetings in a year. The Texas meeting will include the participants from Mexico. It was agreed to hold four meetings. The meetings will probably run for two days. The first day the State will make its presentation, and the second day will be devoted to policy issues.

For the October meeting, there needs to be some progress made towards the inventory.

Recap: Hold a series of workshops to

- Showcase successes
- Inventory
- Learn about model programs in other States
- Identify and prioritize additional information needed.

Each State needs to meet to:

- Get a synthesis of programs
- Assess needs (prioritize needs not projects)

Then all States come together to:

- Talk about science/tech.
- Talk about policy

Strategic Objective I, Goal 2

Mr. Woodrow suggested a conference call to discuss fresh water inflows. There should probably be a separate meeting on that topic at some point. It should not be a topic for the first meeting.

Mr. DuCote asked if the goal of streamlining grant funding includes the Federal funding process. Christy Loper said she thinks the language is inclusive. Funding processes need to be discussed. Long-term monitoring is a problematic area in Federal funding. It was pointed out that Goal 2 seems to focus on grants rather than trying to develop reliable

funding streams. The group needs to get creative in funding. We need to find a legislative tool that brings Gulf funding on a par with other programs like the Chesapeake Bay, Great Lakes, etc. We need to think BIGGER. Ms. Loper said the Alliance Management Team State people met with legislators last week and made presentations on the Alliance.

Mr. Ferraro asked how each group transmits its ideas to the Alliance management team. Ms. Loper said that question should be raised at the New Orleans meeting. It should be put on the agenda for that meeting. There was discussion of reinvigorating the GOMP Bulletin Board for sharing of information. Mr. Woodrow said he wants the coordination to be directly with EPA, NOAA and the Gulf of Mexico Foundation. Our meetings should be coordinated among ourselves. The State representatives felt that Drew Puffer and/or Becky Allee should alert the State representatives about upcoming meetings rather than relying on the Alliance Management team to get the word out. Any items that need to go on the agenda for the July 18 meeting should be submitted to Becky Allee, becky.allee@noaa.gov.

Strategic Objective I, Goal 3

Mr. Woodrow suggested that when each State hosts its meeting, it can describe the roadblocks encountered with regard to regulations and policy. The roadblocks are not just Federal but include States as well. Mr. Runnels said this would be a good topic to discuss at the Florida meeting. His experience has been that some of the opposed roadblocks should not always be taken away. Dr. Dokken said at some point we will need to define what the term “roadblocks” means.

There should be two sets of recommendations—one set common to all States and one set for each individual State. The States can support the other States in that process. Regulations protecting cultural and historical resources are an important aspect. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said it is responsible for ensuring that aspect is covered in the projects in which they are involved. It is part of the permitting process. That topic needs to be discussed further, but not at the October meeting.

Strategic Objective II, Goal 1 and Goal 2

These goals will be part of what will be looked at in the four workshops. Regarding the database, Dr. Dokken pointed out that we do not have to recreate a database as the USGS has a good start on one.

With regard to Item E involving information sharing, Mr. Seidensticker said there is a lot of data out there but it requires being able to capture it and make it available to everyone. A suggestion was made for a toolbox for resource management. Kris Benson said NOAA has developed modeling tools, etc. Several Federal databases were discussed including the National Coastal Data Development Center’s at NOAA. Another one will be working to support NOAA’s ecosystem management efforts. At some point the NCDCC and PHINS will be tied together. Ms. Allee said NOAA could be asked to

consider putting in the data that covers the restoration issues. EDAC is also developing a database, and it is at the point of addressing user needs. Ms. Allee said the NCDDC held a workshop last week to try to identify what the user needs are. If we can get together what type of data we are looking at, she could get that information to the people designing the database. Anyone that has data needs should send that information to Becky Allee, Becky.Alee@noaa.gov as soon as possible.

It was agreed that there was a need for a database clearing house.

Mr. Lorenz said we need to be clear about the definitions—like what is a wetland.

Dr. Dokken said this is an issue where Mexico and the United States could work together. Mr. Leon said most of the data in Mexico is in the universities. There is not much data stored about restoration. There may be some for habitat but not restoration. There is some sharing among the universities but not all.

Dr. Dokken said with regard to Item D, funding assistance for monitoring of non-compensatory restoration projects to determine what was successful--it might be helpful to have some demographers join in this effort. Perhaps State tourism offices can provide some of that data.

It was agreed that by the October meeting, each State should be able to identify the data sources and people who can help with this effort.

On Goal 2B, compensatory mitigation—this may be a topic for the October meeting.

Lessons Learned—that could be another meeting after the four workshops that are held in the first year. It was suggested that this could be tied into some national meetings that many of the participants would already be attending. However, Mr. Woodrow said he thinks the Gulf Region should have its own conference that focuses on the Gulf.

There was discussion about distinguishing net restorative benefits from habitat substitution. Mr. Benson said his group could share some of its information and Mr. Lorenz said there is that kind of information available. Again, the suggestion was made that there needs to be a toolbox that would include such material. Mr. Calnan said Louisiana is looking at post-storm effects on habitats and that would be a useful presentation at some point.

Strategic Objective II, Goal 4

This would be a comprehensive Gulf-wide model of sea level change, subsidence, etc. and could be an early success for this committee. The question was raised as to what needs to be done on that prior to October? The USGS and NOAA have done some work on this. Mexico may also have some interest in it. This could be included in the State meetings.

With regard to Goal 4B, Texas already has an extensive coast-wide network. This will probably be a CIAP initiative involving the Blucher Institute at Texas A&M University and TCOON. Ms. Loper said there is more detailed information available on this topic in the Governors Action Plan, page 18.

With regard to monitoring sea level rise, the monitoring stations were put in for 10 years. That is not long enough, so we need to be sure that those stations stay there or are reinstated.

There is need for a natural hazards risk assessment to be used for conservation and restoration planning. They want a conservation-oriented risks assessment

Regarding Item D, the Corps of Engineers has been tasked by the Alliance to come up with a Gulf-wide Sediment Master Plan. Larry Parsons is the technical lead. He said that the States should get together and give the Corps some guidance on what they want in it. Mr. Runnels said one issue might be the way the Corps selects options. The Corps has to choose the least-cost option, but sometimes for a little more cost, the money could be put to better use. Mr. Ferraro said we will need to have a conference call on this.

Mr. Parsons said the Corps has been asked to host a workshop on this issue. He needs input from the States on who should attend and on what type of product should come out of the workshop. The suggestion was made to include the research work of Dr. Mary Landry.

Timeframe for the workshop is November. Mr. Parsons said there may need to be a meeting before the workshop to establish some clear objectives for the workshop. Dates and times will have to be determined. He said the Corps does not want to redo what has already been done. There is a lot of data out there already, so he needs feedback.

OBSERVATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FROM MEXICO

The Mexican representatives provided some observations. Mr. Leon said in Mexico there is no State mandate for an action plan. They will need some cooperative efforts to push that agenda. He said that the Governors Action Plan should be translated into Spanish. Also, it would be helpful if we could provide him with the Governors office contacts that we have in Mexico. The suggestion was made that for each State project, an effort be made to cooperate with a counterpart in Mexico. Because of the upcoming elections, there will not be any big commitments made before the next election. Mr. Leon said that Elisa Perez will be the contact to help the Mexican groups to be in touch with the States. The Mexican group is going to try to meet in September and have some recommendations ready for the October meeting.

Mr. Leon pointed out that Mexico is ahead in modeling to explain why the loss is happening, how, and how quickly. He also said they cannot officially represent Mexico. He said that one of the first steps would be to try to match the U. S. efforts in Mexico. Dr. Dokken said there are translation services available for the effort, and he will make

the action plan available to them in Spanish. Eduardo Cuevas said they will probably want some U. S. representatives at the September meeting. Mr. Bonilla said they feel it is important to share resources and work together. He will push the education effort to integrate. Ms. Perez said for future meetings, we need to have a high-level of cooperation in order to manage such a large ecosystem and influence the decisions that need to be made. Mr. Banda pointed out that the Laguna Madre and Laguna Tamaulipas are part of the ecosystem, and we need to expand those kinds of projects.

Mr. Cuevas said they need to know who in Mexico is invited to some of the other Alliance meetings. They would like a master list of everybody involved for all of the groups in the Alliance. Ms. Allee said she will discuss that suggestion at the meeting on July 18.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.